

# Western Persian

**Western Persian** or **Iranian Persian** is the most widely spoken dialect of Persian language. It is natively known as **Farsi** or **Parsi**.<sup>[3]</sup> It is officially spoken in Iran and also by various minorities in Iraq and the Persian Gulf states.<sup>[3]</sup> It is mutually intelligible with Dari (Afghan Persian) and Tajik (Tajiki Persian).

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## Etymology

The term *Persian* is an English derivation of Latin *Persiānus*, the adjectival form of *Persia*, itself deriving from Greek *Persís* (Περσίς),<sup>[4]</sup> a Hellenized form of Old Persian *Pārsa* (𐎱𐎠𐎼𐎿),<sup>[5]</sup> which means "Persia" (a region in southwestern Iran, corresponding to modern-day Fars). According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term *Persian* as a language name is first attested in English in the mid-16th century.<sup>[6]</sup>

*Farsi*, which is the Persian word for the Persian language, has also been used widely in English in recent decades, more commonly to refer to the standard Persian of Iran. However, the name *Persian* is still more widely used. The Academy of Persian Language and Literature has called for avoiding the use of the endonym *Farsi* in foreign languages and has maintained that *Persian* is the appropriate designation of the language in English, as it has the longer tradition in western languages and better expresses the role of the language as a mark of cultural and national continuity.<sup>[7]</sup> Eminent Iranian historian and linguist Ehsan Yarshater, founder of *Encyclopædia Iranica* and the Center for Iranian Studies at Columbia University, mentions the same concern in an academic journal on Iranology, rejecting the use of *Farsi* in foreign languages.<sup>[8]</sup>

Western Persian	
<span>Farsi/Parsi</span>	
<span>پارسی‌افارسی</span>	
Pronunciation	<span>[fɒːrˈsiː]</span>
Native <span> </span> to	Iran (Persia)
Region	Western Asia
<div>Native speakers</div>	80 million <span> </span> (2015) <sup>[1]</sup>
<div><span>Language family</span></div>	<div>Indo-European<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Indo-Iranian<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Iranian<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Western Iranian<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Southwestern Iranian<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Persian<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Western Persian</b></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></div>
Dialects	Abadani <div></div> Araki <div></div> Bandari <div></div> Esfahani <div></div> Karbalai <div></div> Kashani <div></div> Kermani <div></div> Mashhadi <div></div> Qazvini <div></div> Shirazi <div></div> Tehrani <div></div> Yazdi <div></div>
<div>Writing system</div>	Perso-Arabic script
Official status	
<div>Official language<span> </span>in</div>	<span><span><span></span></span><span> </span></span> Iran
Regulated <span> </span> by	Academy of Persian Language and Literature
Language codes	
<span>ISO 639-3</span>	pes
Glottolog	west2369 ( <span>http://glottolog.org/resou</span>

Etymologically, the Persian term *Fārsi* derives from its earlier form *Pārsi* (*Pārsik* in Middle Persian), which in turn comes from the same root as the English term *Persian*.<sup>[9][10]</sup> The phonemic shift from /p/ to /f/ is a result of the medieval Arabic influences that followed the Arab conquest of Iran, and is due to the lack of the phoneme /p/ in Standard Arabic.<sup>[11]</sup>

rce/languoid/id/we  
st2369)<sup>[2]</sup>

## Standard varieties' names

Iran's standard Persian has been called, apart from *Persian* and *Farsi*, by names such as *Iranian Persian* and *Western Persian*, exclusively.<sup>[12][13]</sup> Officially, the official language of Iran is designated simply as *Persian* (فارسی, *fārsi*).<sup>[14]</sup>

Dari Persian (فارسی دری, *fārsi-ye dari*), that is the standard Persian of Afghanistan, has been officially named *Dari* (دری, *dari*) since 1958.<sup>[15]</sup> Also referred to as *Afghan Persian* in English, it is one of Afghanistan's two official languages together with Pashto. The term *Dari*, meaning "of the court", originally referred to the variety of Persian used in the court of the Sasanian Empire in capital Ctesiphon, which was spread to the northeast of the empire and gradually replaced the former Iranian dialects of Parthia (Parthian).<sup>[16][17]</sup>

Tajik Persian (форсии тоҷикӣ, *forsi-i tojikī*), that is the standard Persian of Tajikistan, has been officially designated as *Tajik* (тоҷикӣ, *tojikī*) since the time of the Soviet Union.<sup>[18]</sup> It is the name given to the varieties of Persian spoken in Central Asia, in general.<sup>[19]</sup>

## ISO codes

The international language-encoding standard ISO 639-1 uses the code *fa*, as its coding system is mostly based on the native-language designations. The more detailed standard ISO 639-3 uses the name "Persian" (code *fas*) for the dialect continuum spoken across Iran and Afghanistan. This consists of the individual languages *Dari* (Afghan Persian) and *Iranian Persian*.<sup>[20]</sup>

## Differences between Iranian and Afghan Persian

There are phonological, lexical,<sup>[21]</sup> and morphological<sup>[22]</sup> differences between Afghan Persian and Iranian Persian. There are no significant differences in the written forms, other than regional idiomatic phrases.

## Phonology

The principal differences between standard Iranian Persian, based on the dialect of the capital Tehran, and Afghan Persian, as based on the Kabul dialect, are:

1. The merging of *majhul* vowels /eː, iː/ and /oː, uː/ into /iː/ and /uː/ respectively in Iranian Persian, whereas in Afghan Persian, they are still kept separate. For instance, the identically written words شیر 'lion' and 'milk' are pronounced the same in Iranian Persian as /ʃiːr/, but /ʃeːr/ for 'lion' and /ʃiːr/ for 'milk' in Afghan Persian. The long vowel in زور "quick" and زور "strong" is realized as /uː/ in Iranian Persian, in contrast, these words are pronounced /zuːd/ and /zoːr/ respectively by Persian speakers in Afghanistan.

2. The treatment of the diphthongs of early Classical Persian "aw" (as "ow" in Engl. "cow") and "ay" (as "i" in English "ice"), which are pronounced [ow] (as in Engl. "low") and [ej] (as in English "day") in Iranian Persian. Dari, on the other hand, is more archaic, e.g. نوروز 'Persian New Year' is realized as /nowruːz/ in Iranian and /nawroːz/ in Afghan Persian, and نَخیر 'no' is /naxejr/ in Iranian and /naxajr/ in Afghan Persian. Moreover, [ow] is simplified to [o] in normal Iranian speech, thereby merging with the short vowel /u/ (see below). This does not occur in Afghan Persian.
3. The high short vowels /i/ and /u/ tend to be lowered in Iranian Persian to [e] and [o], unlike are in Dari where they might have both high and lowered allophones.
4. The pronunciation of the labial consonant (پ), which is realized as a voiced labiodental fricative [v], but Afghan Persian still retains the (classical) bilabial pronunciation [w]; [v] is found in Afghan Persian as an allophone of /f/ before voiced consonants and as variation of /b/ in some cases, along with [β].
5. The convergence of voiced uvular stop [ɢ] (ق) and voiced velar fricative [ɣ] (غ) in Iranian Persian (presumably under the influence of Turkic languages like Azeri and Turkmen),<sup>[23]</sup> is still kept separate in Dari.
6. The realization of short final "a" (ا) as [e] in Iranian Persian.
  - This means that [a] and [e] in word-final positions are separate in Dari, but not in Iranian Persian, where [e] is the word-final allophone of /æ/.
7. The realization of short non-final "a" as [æ] in Iranian Persian.

## Dialect continuum

The dialects of Dari spoken in Northern, Central and Eastern Afghanistan, for example in Kabul, Mazar, and Badakhshan, have distinct features compared to Iranian Persian. However, the dialect of Dari spoken in Western Afghanistan stands in between the Afghan and Iranian Persian. For instance, the Herati dialect shares vocabulary and phonology with both Dari and Iranian Persian. Likewise, the dialect of Persian in Eastern Iran, for instance in Mashhad, is quite similar to the Herati dialect of Afghanistan.

The Kabuli dialect has become the standard model of Dari in Afghanistan, as has the Tehrani dialect in relation to the Persian in Iran. Since the 1940s, Radio Afghanistan has broadcast its Dari programs in Kabuli Dari, which ensured the homogenization between the Kabuli version of the language and other dialects of Dari spoken throughout Afghanistan. Since 2003, the media, especially the private radio and television broadcasters, have carried out their Dari programs using the Kabuli variety.

## References

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6. *Oxford English Dictionary* online, s.v. "Persian", draft revision June 2007.
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10. Spooner, Brian (2012). "Dari, Farsi, and Tojiki" (<https://books.google.com/books?id=52aic9I7rwC&pg=PA94>). In Schiffman, Harold (ed.). *Language Policy and Language Conflict in Afghanistan and Its Neighbors: The Changing Politics of Language Choice*. Leiden: Brill. p. 94. ISBN 9004201459.
11. Campbell, George L.; King, Gareth, eds. (2013). "Persian" (<https://books.google.com/books?id=DWAqAAAAQBAJ&pg=PA1339>). *Compendium of the World's Languages* (3rd ed.). Routledge. p. 1339.
12. Richardson, Charles Francis (1892). *The International Cyclopedia: A Compendium of Human Knowledge*. Dodd, Mead. p. 541.
13. Strazny, Philipp (2013). *Encyclopedia of Linguistics*. Routledge. p. 324. ISBN 978-1-135-45522-4.
14. Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran: Chapter II, Article 15: "The official language and script of Iran, the *lingua franca* of its people, is Persian. Official documents, correspondence, and texts, as well as text-books, must be in this language and script. However, the use of regional and tribal languages in the press and mass media, as well as for teaching of their literature in schools, is allowed in addition to Persian."
15. Olesen, Asta (1995). *Islam and Politics in Afghanistan*. 3. Psychology Press. p. 205. "There began a general promotion of the Pashto language at the expense of Farsi — previously dominant in the educational and administrative system (...) — and the term 'Dari' for the Afghan version of Farsi came into common use, being officially adopted in 1958."
16. Lazard, Gilbert (17 November 2011). "Dārī" (<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/dari>). *Encyclopædia Iranica*. VII. pp. 34–35. "It is derived from the word for *dar* (court, lit., "gate"). *Dārī* was thus the language of the court and of the capital, Ctesiphon. On the other hand, it is equally clear from this passage that *dārī* was also in use in the eastern part of the empire, in Khorasan, where it is known that in the course of the Sasanian period Persian gradually supplanted Parthian and where no dialect that was not Persian survived. The passage thus suggests that *dārī* was actually a form of Persian, the common language of Persia. (...) Both were called *pārsī* (Persian), but it is very likely that the language of the north, that is, the Persian used on former Parthian territory and also in the Sasanian capital, was distinguished from its congener by a new name, *dārī* ([language] of the court)."
17. Paul, Ludwig (19 November 2013). "Persian Language: i: Early New Persian" (<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/persian-language-1-early-new-persian>). *Encyclopædia Iranica*. "Northeast. Khorasan, the homeland of the Parthians (called *abaršahr* "the upper lands" in MP), had been partly Persianized already in late Sasanian times. Following Ebn al-Moqaffa , the variant of Persian spoken there was called *Dārī* and was based upon the one used in the Sasanian capital Seleucia-Ctesiphon (Ar. *al-Madā 'en*). (...) Under the specific historical conditions that have been sketched above, the Dari (Middle) Persian of the 7th century was developed, within two centuries, to the Dari (New) Persian that is attested in the earliest specimens of NP poetry in the late 9th century."

18. Baker, Mona (2001). *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=ewBfSBo8rRsC>). Psychology Press. p. 518. ISBN 978-0-415-25517-2. "All this affected translation activities in Persian, seriously undermining the international character of the language. The problem was compounded in modern times by several factors, among them the realignment of Central Asian Persian, renamed Tajiki by the Soviet Union, with Uzbek and Russian languages, as well as the emergence of a language reform movement in Iran which paid no attention to the consequences of its pronouncements and actions for the language as a whole."
19. Perry, John (20 July 2009). "Tajik ii. Tajik Persian" (<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/tajik-ii-tajiki-persian>). *Encyclopædia Iranica*.
20. "Documentation for ISO 639 identifier: fas" (<http://www.sil.org/iso639-3/documentation.asp?id=fas>). Sil.org. Retrieved 13 July 2010.
21. "Ethnologue report for language code: prs" ([http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_language.asp?code=prs](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=prs)). Ethnologue.com. Retrieved 26 August 2012.
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23. A. Pisowicz, *Origins of the New and Middle Persian phonological systems* (Cracow 1985), p. 112-114, 117.

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